



Valley Mod Builders

By Michael Shivar

Over the past eight weeks, four of our students here at the Ranch joined three participants from neighboring Christian programs and our surrounding community for our construction pre-apprenticeship program. Seven men began the journey together, and we are proud to say that all seven completed it.

Throughout the eight weeks, the students were given the opportunity to prepare themselves for a future in the construction industry. They gained hands-on experience, learned about workplace and jobsite safety, worked alongside seasoned professionals, and developed skills that can help open the door to employment and apprenticeship opportunities.

But anyone who has walked alongside our students knows that accomplishments like these represent more than what appears on a certificate.

For our Faith Home Adult & Teen Challenge students especially, these eight weeks became another part of the larger work God is already doing in their lives. Every morning they showed up, every new skill they learned, every difficult task they completed, and every time they chose to keep going was another opportunity to practice the discipline, responsibility, perseverance, and integrity they are developing during their time here.

Whatever their individual stories may have looked like before entering the classroom, they shared the experience of working toward something that could help change the direction of their future.

At the end of those eight weeks, every student successfully completed the program. All seven graduates received an OSHA 10 certification, a Pre-Apprenticeship Completion Certificate, and certifications in Confined Spaces and Traffic Control.

Those certificates represent real accomplishments and provide credentials the students can carry with them into the workforce. But they also represent something less visible: eight weeks of commitment, dedication, and perseverance. For men rebuilding their lives, there is something powerful about being able to look back and say, "I finished what I started."

Throughout the program, we had the privilege of seeing students grow in confidence as they discovered new abilities and began thinking differently about what might be possible for their future. They weren't simply learning construction skills; they were being given another opportunity to see that the lives God is rebuilding can have purpose and direction.

Colossians 3:23 tells us, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters." Our hope is that this is ultimately what our students carry beyond these eight weeks: not simply the ability to work, but a new understanding of how and why we work. We are proud of all our graduates and especially grateful to have watched the men from Faith Home Adult & Teen Challenge reach a significant and foundational milestone during their journey here at the Ranch. We are also thankful for our instructors, Serge Ivanyuk and Kevin Rikard, as well as the staff, partners, and everyone who helped make this program possible.

These men have received practical tools, hands-on training, industry certifications, and life skills that can help them build successful careers and brighter futures for themselves and their families. More importantly, our prayer is that God continues to use experiences like this to help them build something even greater—a new life and a new future, built upon the foundation they are developing through their relationship with Jesus Christ.



Alex Harden Testimony

My Name is Alex Harden,

For a long time, I was an alcoholic and a gambler. I tried to get sober on my own, but no matter what I did, nothing seemed to work. I knew God growing up, but somewhere along the way, I had drifted away from Him.

What started out as partying eventually became something much darker. Alcohol and gambling slowly took control of my life. From outside, it probably looked like I had everything together. I could smile, joke around, and carry on like everything was fine. But on the inside, I was a complete mess. I compare that time in my life to wearing a mask.

The problem with wearing a mask is that nobody knows the real you. You can convince everyone around you that you're okay, but eventually you have to be honest with yourself. And I wasn't okay.

I was lonely. I was lost. I was trying to fill something inside of me with alcohol, gambling, and the things of this world. I kept trying to fix my problems myself, but the harder I tried, the deeper I seemed to get.

Eventually, I came to a point where I knew I couldn't keep living the way I was living. I needed help. That's when I went to a program called Teen Challenge. That is where my journey really began.

To be honest, the program was hard for me. I had to give up things that I had held onto for a long time—my pride, my ego, my control, and the idea that I knew what was best for my life. I had spent so long doing things my own way that surrendering was one of the hardest things I had ever done. For the first few months, I still tried to do things my way. I thought I had everything under control. I thought I could figure things out on my own. Even though I was in a program designed to help me change, I was still fighting to maintain control.

Looking back, I realize that I wasn't just fighting the program. I was fighting surrender. I didn't want to completely let go and trust God with my life. About six months into the program, something changed.

I remember one day praying to God for about 90 minutes in the orchard. I was trying to figure out whether this was really

His plan for me. I had so many questions. I remember thinking, "Why am I here? Why is this happening to me?" At the time, I thought God was punishing me by sending me to a program. I thought this was the consequence of everything that had gone wrong in my life, and I didn't understand why God would allow me to go through something so difficult.

But now, looking back, I see it completely differently. God wasn't punishing me. God was giving me another chance at life. Going to a program was a consequence of my actions, but God used that consequence to change the direction of my life. What I saw as punishment, God was using for my good. That realization changed everything for me.

I finally began to understand who God really was. I started to realize that He wasn't trying to take my life away from me—He was trying to give me a new one. I learned that God had a plan for my life and he loved me for me. For the first time, I was willing to trust Him. I was finally willing to say, "God, I don't know what Your plan is, but I'm willing to give it a try." That was the beginning of real change in my life.

I graduated from the program almost six years ago, and I have not had a drink or gambled since October 15, 2019. When I look at my life today, it is almost unrecognizable compared to where I was.

I am beyond blessed. I get to walk through this life free from the things that once controlled me. I have a whole new career. I have a completely different outlook on life. I have been blessed with an amazing girlfriend. I've been able to purchase homes and accomplish things I never thought were possible.

But as grateful as I am for all of those things, none of them are the most important part of my story. The most important part is my relationship with Jesus. Because I could have a great career, a nice home, money, relationships, and everything else the world says should make me happy—but none of those things compare to knowing Jesus and having a relationship with Him.

The greatest gift God gave me wasn't just sobriety. He gave me freedom. He gave me a purpose. He gave me hope. And most importantly, He gave me Himself.

Today, I don't have to wear that mask anymore. My story isn't about how strong I was. It's about how faithful God was when I wasn't.

I am thankful for Teen Challenge. I'm thankful for the people who walked with me when I didn't know how to walk on my own. I'm thankful for the lessons I learned, the difficult days that shaped me, and even the consequences that brought me to that place.

Most of all, I'm thankful that God never gave up on me.